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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

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October 3, 1979

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Argentina  
AK 325A

TEL. NO. 812-337-3611

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Bruce Alan Kiernan  
Human Rights Coordinator  
American Association for the Advancement of Science  
1515 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Bruce,

Thanks for your phone call and for your letter. Let me try to summarize what I know concerning the death of Hector Abrales.

Immediately after Hector's disappearance his wife contacted a number of politicians and high-ranking army and navy officers asking them to find out what they could about his whereabouts. For a period of about a month or so the little news available was slightly encouraging. One of the "contacts" who assured her that Hector was alive had taken one of Hector's pipes with him in order to identify himself to Hector as a friend of the family when he had a chance to talk to him. Then, in a single week, at least four of the more reliable sources (including the fellow of the pipe) reported that Hector was, in fact, dead. These sources were independent from each other, as far as we can gather, and apparently highly reliable. Moreover, while I was in Buenos Aires (during the month of July) yet another source (this time a former Peronist Congressman with close friends in the Presidency) told Mrs. Abrales that he had just seen Hector's name in a list of dead people which one of the President's advisors had shown to him. This report was more detailed than any of the preceding ones: It included information such as, that Hector had died in the process of being tortured and that the government sources were now inclined to think that they had made a mistake in Hector's case. The reason why he was kidnapped is that he was thought to be involved in the Graiver affair whereas it was now thought that he probably had nothing to do with it. Apparently there was no intention to kill him but something went wrong during the torture process. Some further details were made available concerning where and how the killing was performed, but I would rather not go into them since they were disclosed to me in confidence.

I am including a few newspaper clippings concerning a recent development: It will now be possible to regard a "desaparecido" as dead for certain legal purposes, provided that certain requirements are fulfilled. I also include a document which may be of some interest to you: A copy of the latest presentation to the Federal Court in connection with the Timmerman case. I happen to have a copy of this document because I am an intimate friend of Timmerman's lawyer, Mr. Genaro Carrio, who, by the way, was until recently a member of the OAS Human Rights Commission.

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I guess that's all for the time being. Once again, thank you so much for your concern. I do not think there is much short-run hope for Argentina. Those among the opponents of this government who have any real chance to replace it in the foreseeable future are not nice people with a balanced view of things but persons with a different opinion on whom to kill. The present government is surely right about one thing: Those they replaced were not stern supporters of human rights but criminals who actively promoted both left- and right-wing terrorism. The situation was better then than now merely because the two bands of thugs managed to spend a great deal of time hurting each other. Now we have only right-wing terrorism organized by one part of the military government and tolerated by the rest. Since Peronism and the army are the only two real forces in Argentine politics, I fear that for a long time Argentina is going to be ruled by a ruthless government, whatever its political sign, and that the best one can hope for is to bend slightly the course of events in the direction of sanity by the operation of forces both from within and from outside the country, attempting to mitigate the destructive tendencies of the people in power. That is why I am so grateful for efforts such as yours and that of the AAAS.

Best regards,

*Alberto*

Alberto Coffa



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